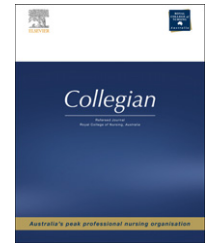




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A conversation about practice development and knowledge translation as mechanisms to align the academic and clinical contexts for the advancement of nursing practice

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Summary Practice development (PD) and knowledge translation (KT) have emerged recently as methodologies which assist advancement in gathering and using evidence in practice. For nursing to benefit from these methodologies there is a need to advance the dialogue between academia and the service sector concerning the use and further development of these methodologies as well as how we create the most effective partnerships between academia and practice. To advance this dialogue and to gain insights into the similarities and differences between KT and PD and between the academic and the service sectors, four conversations from different leaders in these sectors have been gathered and are presented here.

These four discrete narratives are presented to showcase the diversity of sector contexts in relation to PD and KT methodologies. Narrative One focuses on some of the theoretical and policy issues related to creating partnerships between traditional “knowledge creation systems” (universities) and “knowledge utilization systems” Narrative Two discusses how a large school of nursing responded to the challenge of creating partnerships for practice development in an

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attempt to bridge the academic/service divide and produce benefits to both organisations. Narratives Three and Four describe the view of practice development from the service side. The final section of the paper presents an agenda for discussion and action based on the emerging set of principles.

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Introduction

Practice development and knowledge translation have emerged recently as methodologies which assist advancement in gathering and using evidence in practice. For nursing to benefit from these methodologies there is a need to advance the dialogue between academia and the service sector concerning the use and further development of these methodologies in order to achieve the best outcomes.

As a group of nurses committed to improving practice and patient care, we believe it is time to more actively and collaboratively embrace the challenges of reducing academic and clinical divides. Our intention is to work together to establish more effective ways of getting knowledge into practice. Service users in health care systems need health professionals and academics to systematically work through these challenges to create better models. Indeed, it is our responsibility as academic and service leaders to model this in our behaviour and actions. Failure to enact changes in this direction will result in the provision of care that is not up to date with the current state of knowledge and renders practice as a poor cousin to knowledge generation.

Knowledge translation as the assessment, review, and utilization of research, in order to put knowledge into action (CIHR, 2004), is on the lips of many health professionals yet the common ground across the various contexts of academia, nursing practice and practice development (the systematic process of developing effective and person-centred cultures in health services) remains somewhat elusive. The lack of clarity and level of disquiet around the concepts of knowledge translation (KT) and practice development (PD) indicates that these are important topics for key professional organisations (such as Councils of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery) and journals in order to stimulate debate about these issues and highlight the national and international imperatives to lead the way forward.

Questions arise for nursing about how we create the most effective partnerships between academia and practice and how we accommodate different worldviews around language, method and product. To advance insights into the similarities and differences, four conversations from different leaders in the sectors have been gathered and are presented here. Drawing from this, recommendations for further dialogue and professional strategy are advanced.

Background

The ideas for this paper emerged from a workshop hosted by the Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia and New Zealand) in September 2009. The purpose of the workshop was to stimulate debate around the nature of the methodologies of practice development and translational research. Following the workshop, a small group

was convened to construct a paper which explicates the multiple perspectives operating within the health service and education sectors in relation to these methodologies and the advancement of practice.

Four discrete narratives are presented to showcase the diversity of sector contexts in relation to PD and KT methodologies. In each of the narratives the authors reveal genuine commitments to the advancement of practice using practice development and KT methodologies situated within their respective contexts. As a group of writers studying the perspectives we were struck by the extent to which context influenced the emphases and strategies in relation to what was considered important. The narratives are reproduced in the paper without overt analytic framing to allow the contextual elements to be expressed in a more naturalistic way. In this way it is anticipated that readers will think about these in relation to their own contexts and consider mechanisms that may help to align higher education research and teaching and health service policy and provision.

Narrative One focuses on some of the theoretical and policy issues related to creating partnerships between traditional "knowledge creation systems" (universities) and "knowledge utilization systems" (in this case healthcare facilities) as well as exploring more fully the link between PD and KT. Narrative Two discusses how a large school of nursing responded to the challenge of creating partnerships for practice development in an attempt to bridge the academic/service divide and produce benefits to both organisations. This narrative comments on the difficulties of embedding PD activity as part of the overall academic agenda and the strategies used to achieve this. Narratives Three and Four describe the view of practice development from the service side. Narrative Three explores the implementation of a state-wide PD program aimed at bringing about evidence based and person-centred practice change. Factors contributing to the successful implementation are explored. Narrative Four explores a nurse executive's view of the benefits of implementing PD ways of working and provides a framework for its implementation. The final section of the paper presents an agenda for discussion and action based on the emerging set of principles.

Narratives

The contribution of different players within nursing to the development of practice is shaped directly by the concerns and mandates associated with their roles and sector imperatives. If we are to afford strategic development across nursing as new methodologies evolve it is critical that an understanding of the perspectives and experiences is achieved before seeking to identify a forward strategy that involves all players in a way that is mindful of their contexts. Strategic alliances will only work if the conditions are

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